

Engineering House Is Off to a Great Start

Generations of alumni might envy the class of 2010. Last fall more than 120 pre-engineering students moved into dorm rooms on two floors of McCarty Hall. "Engineering House" aims to improve the freshman experience by fostering a strong peer community. Students go to classes and study together, buy books from each other, commiserate over tough courses, and also find time for fun by playing games like Cranium or working out at the IMA.

"Engineering House is really useful because we are all ambitious people so there's less chance of getting side-tracked, as happens in other dorms," said Yu-ting Hsieh.

"We're expanding the house to include a third floor next fall," said associate dean Eve Riskin. "It should be a winner for student recruitment and boosting retention."



Pre-engineering frosh (L to R) Dennis Linn, Kathy Lee, Miranda Schmidt, Jeff Beorse (kneeling), Kyle Shoum, Michael McMillan, Yu-ting Hsieh, and Marita Rodriguez have found friends and study pals in Engineering House.

Global Outreach: Small Solutions with Big Impact



Photo by Mary Levin, UW Photography

Graduate student Tapan Parikh modified a cell phone for microfinance borrowers and fair-trade coffee growers. At right, Indian women record the day's transactions from their retail shops and other businesses.



Photo by ekgaon

Modified cell phone helps the poor build businesses

Tapan Parikh took a risk when he chose an unconventional topic for his doctoral work in computer science and engineering. "Now he is one of the leading researchers in creating information technology to meet the needs of the Third World," said his advisor, CSE Professor Ed Lazowska.

Parikh designed mobile phone software for use by members of grassroots microfinance banking cooperatives that offer very small loans to start or expand businesses. Recipients participate in a microfinance peer group to monitor the progress of their businesses. Previous efforts to move recordkeeping from ledgers to computers had failed in poor rural areas. Parikh, a New York native of Indian heritage, adapted a mobile phone to take photos of bookkeeping forms and prompt users to enter numbers and transmit data by text message to a central server. He founded a company in India, ekgaon, that contracts with CARE India to provide phones to more than 700 cooperatives.

Learn more about this work: <http://www.cs.washington.edu/homes/tapan>, <http://ekgaon.com>, and <http://uwnews.washington.edu/ni/public/print2.asp>.

It takes a stove to heal a village

It takes a wood-fired adobe cooking stove with a chimney that vents through a tin roof. Showing villagers how to install these low-tech but efficient stoves and roofs will help poor families in a remote area of the Andes overcome chronic lung ailments caused by smoke-filled houses, and heart disease triggered by an insect that thrives in thatched roofs.

Engineering students with the UW student chapter of Engineers Without Borders will bring materials and volunteer their skills this July in Yamayo, Bolivia. Learn about this project and the students' efforts to fund it by visiting <http://students.washington.edu/ewbuw>.

